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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 005433

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: NSC CHIEF ON EMERGENCY RULE, NPA, AND TERRORISTS

REF: A. MANILA 5166

[B](#). MANILA 4801

Classified By: CDA Paul W. Jones, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary and comment: In a one-on-one meeting with Charge 11/21, National Security chief Bert Gonzales said he has recommended to President Arroyo that she invoke a Constitutional provision "as soon as possible" that would allow her to order the military and police to arrest leftist politicians and suspected Communist forces whom Gonzales believes are now coordinating with the Opposition to overthrow the government. Gonzales said that the weakness of the Opposition offers the NPA an unprecedented opportunity to enter government if the President is forced from office. The President will surely face another impeachment when the one-year hiatus expires next June, he asserted; a six-month duration of emergency measures would substantially weaken the NPA threat before June. The lack of prospect of a serious anti-terrorism law, as well as the lack of an anti-sedition law or modern national security law, left the government no other options for dealing with the growing NPA threat, Gonzales said. The fight against the NPA must be 80 percent political and human rights must be strictly observed, he emphasized. Regarding the current wave of killings of leftist politicians, Gonzales said most are victims of an aggressive purge of moderate leftists by the NPA. On the terrorist threat, Gonzales said he had just returned from Southern Command in Zamboanga, where he advised military leaders to avoid military engagements, such as current operations on Sulu, that unite locals against the armed forces, and instead rely on the "Basilan model" of development and cooperation with U.S. advice and support. Gonzales worried about the growing islamization of terrorists in Mindanao, which could produce suicide bombers in the future.

[1](#)2. (S) Summary/Comment continued: Charge told Gonzales that the U.S. would not support emergency rule, that we did not share his analysis of the threat posed by the NPA, and that a campaign against the NPA would be rightly seen as detracting from the Philippines' role in the war on terrorism. Gonzales said he recognized that the Philippines would be "isolated" in its fight against the NPA, but that it was necessary for the survival of the nation and would not detract from the fight against terrorism. Gonzales' recommendation to the President increases our concern over the possibility of emergency rule, but other senior advisors, such as Executive Secretary Ermita and Mindanao advisor Dureza, have recently

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indicated to Charge that emergency rule is not likely or imminent. Gonzales' concerns reflect those presented in an earlier aide memoire to senior USG officials (ref a) and a separate GRP document passed to Embassy (ref b). Septel will analyze the Communist threat in greater detail. We do not believe the threats Gonzales cites are imminent or real, although the legal leftists are indeed working closely, though in our judgment ineffectively, with other elements of the Opposition to force the President out of office. We do not have evidence to substantiate his claim of coordination between the NPA and legal leftist politicians. Gonzales indicated that the President may ask him to travel to Washington in December. If so, we recommend high level meetings at NSC and State to hear clear USG opposition to the emergency measures he has in mind. End summary and comment.

NPA/Leftist/Opposition Threat

[1](#)3. (S) National Security Advisor Noberto Gonzales, in a one-on-one meeting with CDA on November 21, said that he was recommending to President Arroyo that she respond to what he sees as an ongoing rebellion by the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA) with the imposition soon of limited emergency measure for a six month period. (Note: Article VII, Section 18 of the 1987 Constitution gives the President the right as Commander-in-Chief to suspend habeas corpus or place the Philippines or any part thereof under martial law for up to sixty days in response to invasion or rebellion. Congress may revoke such a proclamation but does not need to approve it, although Congress would need to extend it beyond sixty days. End note) Gonzales said that the GRP would use such powers to arrest all CPP Central Committee members, which he believes includes party list Congressman Satur Ocampo, and other

members of Congress whom he believes to be front men for the CPP/NPA. He admitted that there was no specific plan to date, but noted many things in the Philippines happen without a plan. He insisted that the GRP needed to take forceful measures as soon as possible in order to disrupt the activities of the CPP/NPA, especially in the run-up to what Gonzales predicted would be another impeachment effort against President Arroyo next summer. He said that he had told President Arroyo that, for the good of the country, she should take this step in order finally to get rid the Philippines of the Communist presence, noting that all of the Philippines' neighbors had already done so.

14. (S) CDA told Gonzales that the U.S. would not support emergency rule, that we did not share his analysis of the threat posed by the NPA, and that a campaign against the NPA would be seen as detracting from genuine counter-terrorism activities for domestic political reasons. Gonzales insisted that the GRP had sufficient resources to undertake this new measure as well as to continue its counterterrorism operations and cooperation.

15. (S) Gonzales explained further that the CPP/NPA, unlike during the EDSA 1 and EDSA 2 movements, was joining forces with the legitimate opposition in order to "overthrow" President Arroyo, believing her to be in a weak political position and also recognizing that the Opposition itself was weak. These leftists were clearly part of planning meetings for protest activities with Opposition figures, another new development, he claimed. He added that the CPP/NPA was also now coordinating its military activities in the field with these political activities in the capital, yet another new development. (Note: we will continue to monitor each of these areas for evidence to support Gonzales' views. End note)

16. (S) Gonzales said that the GRP response to this threat would be "80 percent political and 20 percent military," and that he had already begun meeting with military officials throughout the country to prepare them for this eventuality. He claimed that he consistently urged them to handle military oppositions with clear respect for human rights, given the expected level of international scrutiny. CDA expressed concern about numerous killings of Bayan Muna and other leftists in recent months, but Gonzales claimed that in most cases the NPA was actually purging more moderate figures, though he could not exclude military collusion in some cases.

Terrorist Threat -----

17. (S) Gonzales offered criticism, which he said he had shared with SOUTHCOM Commander General Adan, for the latest military offensive against the Abu Sayyaf Group and Nur Misuari Breakaway Group on Sulu, noting that the locals were Tausugs and would fight back fiercely. He said that he had encouraged instead use of the "Basilan" model to win over the locals by positive humanitarian and civic programs. He commented that local military commanders keen on promotion were probably behind the initiation of such offensives.

18. (C) Gonzales also warned about the increased "Islamization" of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), calling Vice Chair Aleem Abdulaziz Mimbantas especially "dangerous" and linked to the Jemaah Islamayah. He expressed concern about the role of madrassas in radicalizing Muslims in MILF areas, and worry that this phenomenon could produce suicide bombers in the future. He said he would personally work to empower moderate Muslims to confront these radicals, as he claimed was successfully done in Mindanao in 1996.

CT legislation -----

19. (C) Gonzales lamented the lack of anti-terrorism and anti-secession laws, making it virtually impossible to arrest NPA members and other leftists, even with caught with weapons. He expressed doubt that the Congress would ever pass serious anti-terrorism legislation because of the current political gridlock and the Opposition's concern over abuses by the government.

DC Visit -----

10. (S) Gonzales indicated that President Arroyo had asked him to go to Washington in December to discuss intelligence cooperation, among other issues. CDA said that we would want to set up meetings for him at the NSC and State Department as well as CIA, in order to hear USG views on this possible emergency measures as well as other issues of intelligence sharing and counterterrorism cooperation.
Jones